

# SPRING VALLEY NEWSLETTER

Department of Health – Spring/Summer 2003, Vol. 5

James A. Buford, Director

## Spring Valley Scientific Advisory Panel

On February 3, 2003, the Spring Valley Scientific Advisory Panel held its fourth meeting to receive information on the Spring Valley project. Status reports on the Department of Health's activities since the last meeting and remediation work being conducted by the Corps of Engineers were presented to the Panel members. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) discussed the Phase II exposure investigation conducted in the summer and fall of 2002. The Panel has reviewed the results of the exposure investigation and the comments are included in its report to the Mayor.

The members of the Advisory Panel are:

Bailus Walker, Jr., PhD., MPH (Chair): Professor of Environmental & Occupational Medicine, Howard University College of Medicine; Chairman of the Committee on Toxicology, National Academy of Sciences

Kenneth P. Cantor, PhD., MPH: Epidemiologist and Senior Researcher, Division of Cancer, Epidemiology and Genetics, National Cancer Institute

Tee Lamont Guidotti, MD, MPH: Chairman, Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, School of Public Health and Health Services, George Washington University

Sidney Green, Jr., PhD. Graduate Associate Professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology, Howard University College of Medicine

Steven Havas, MD, MPH, MS: Professor of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, University of Maryland School of Medicine

Paul Kostecki, PhD: Research Associate Professor of Environmental Health and Sciences, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Environmental Health and Sciences Department

Jeffrey Kraskin, OD: Optometrist and Spring Valley Community Representative

Rebecca T. Parkin, PhD., MPH: Associate Research Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health, George Washington University, School of Public Health and Health Services

The Executive Director of the Panel is Deitra Lee, JD, MPA: DC Department of Health, Bureau of Hazardous Material and Toxic Substances. Any questions related to the Scientific Advisory Panel may be directed to the Executive Director at (202) 535-1904.

## Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Panel

The following information was presented to the Advisory Panel at its fourth meeting on February 3, 2003:

Status Report of Department of Health's Activities  
Lynette Stokes, PhD, MPH, Chief, Bureau of Hazardous Material and Toxic Substances  
Department of Health

Update on the Department of Health's Surveillance System To Characterize Arsenic Disorders  
Michael Richardson, MD, Senior Deputy Director for Health Promotion, Department of Health

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's Exposure Investigation (Phase II)  
Steve Dearwent, Epidemiologist, Exposure Investigation Section, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

Update on the Corps of Engineers' Work at Spring Valley  
Gary Schilling, Program Manager, Spring Valley, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District

Environmental Protection Agency Activities at Spring Valley  
Steve Hirsch, Remedial Project Manager, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region III

Restoration Advisory Board Perspective of Work in Spring Valley  
Sarah Stowell Shapley, Former Co-Chair of the Restoration Advisory Board

The Panel's report on this meeting is available at the Office of the Executive Director.

## Arsenic Investigation along the C&O Canal

During the week of March 31, 2003, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), at the request of the National Park Service (NPS), conducted a sampling event in an area along the C&O Canal near Chain Bridge. This is an area where metallic anomalies had been found by staff from the Environmental Health Administration and later by staff from the Naval Research Laboratory. Recently, NPS conducted sampling and discovered low levels of arsenic in one area of standing water. NPS was concerned that the presence of arsenic might pose an undue health risk to citizens using that area of the park. The purpose of EPA's sampling was to determine if higher levels of arsenic are present in the area.

Preliminary results reported by EPA indicate that there were no elevated levels of arsenic found in the sampling area.

## ATSDR and DOH Exposure Investigation (Phase II)

A follow-up to the March 2002 exposure investigation was conducted from July through November 2002 by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) in conjunction with the Department of Health (DOH). Voluntary urine arsenic testing was offered to those individuals who met the following criteria:

1. Residents who were originally tested during Phase I of the Exposure Investigation (March 2002);
2. Residents of properties that were undergoing Time Critical Removal Actions (TCRAs); and
3. Residents of properties that have one or more grids above 150-ppm arsenic.

Urine samples were collected from 40 individuals (34 adults and 6 children) in 19 homes. These individuals live in homes with elevated soil arsenic levels, or in homes that are adjacent to the properties being remediated for elevated soil arsenic levels.

### Conclusions of the Exposure Investigation (Phase II)

- Overall, urine arsenic testing showed no significant arsenic exposure in the population tested.
- Three individuals had detectable levels of inorganic arsenic in their urine.
- The levels that were detectable would not be expected to cause health problems.

For additional information regarding this report and other ATSDR documents regarding Spring Valley, access their website:  
<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/springvalley>

## What's in This Newsletter

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## Controlled Detonation Chamber and Explosive Destruction System

During March 2003, the Corps of Engineers, using a T-10 Controlled Detonation Chamber (CDC), destroyed over 73 conventional munitions from World War I that had been found during the on-going investigation and cleanup of the Spring Valley area. The use of the CDC had been carefully reviewed by the Department of Health and the Metropolitan Police Department before approval was given to utilize this system in the District.

In May of this year, the Corps brought onto the federal property a device called the Explosive Destruction System (EDS), which is similar to the Controlled Detonation Chamber. The main difference between the two devices is that the EDS will be used to destroy munitions that are suspected of containing chemical warfare materials. It also uses chemical reagents to neutralize any chemical warfare materials that are contained in the munitions. Once destruction and neutralization are complete the chemical reagents, along with the scrap metal left over from the destroyed munition, will be shipped off-site as hazardous waste.

The Department of Health and the Metropolitan Police Department once again reviewed this device and determined that the use of the EDS on site would be safer than shipping all of the suspected chemical munitions off-site. The EDS will be operated inside a steel Vapor Containment Structure (VCS) similar to the one used during intrusive investigations on Glenbrook Road. This will prevent the release of any chemical agents into the neighborhood in the unlikely event of an accident during the operation of the EDS.

The EDS was placed into operation during the week of May 12, 2003. It will remain on site for approximately one month.

## DC Council Hearing

On May 20, 2003, the D.C. City Council announced that a joint public hearing would be held on July 14, 2003, at 10:00 am, in the Council Chamber at 1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW. The hearing will be co-chaired by Councilmember Carol Schwartz, Chair of the Committee on Public Works and the Environment, and Councilmember Sandy Allen, Chair of the Committee on Human Services.

The hearing will provide the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers the opportunity to present a status report on its activities in Spring Valley and give citizens a chance to comment.

## Medical Surveillance System

In response to a recommendation from the Mayor's Scientific Advisory Panel, the Department of Health, under the auspices of Dr. Michael Richardson, Senior Deputy Director and Chief Medical Officer of the District of Columbia, has established a medical surveillance system to track illnesses that may be related to arsenic exposure.

Dr. Richardson has sent letters to medical professionals in the District of Columbia and Montgomery County, Maryland, asking them to report any unexplained illnesses that may be related to environmental exposure to arsenic.

If you or a member of your family are ill and you are concerned that the illness may be related to arsenic exposure, please ask your doctor to contact the dedicated phone line for the medical surveillance system on (202) 442-9044.

## Spring Valley Information Line

While we have not received any calls on the Information Line for some time, the line is still in operation and we are still accepting any information you have that might be related to World War I activities, including anecdotal information on diseases, stressed vegetation, dead animals, and findings of munitions and other articles which might be related to past chemical warfare research.

Of course, if you have specific information on illnesses that you may be suffering from, we ask that you utilize the medical surveillance system discussed above.

We appreciate all of the information we have received from the community, and we ask that you please continue to call the Information Line with any information you may have.

The number is: (202) 535-1755.

## ATSDR and DOH Prevention Tips For Spring Valley Homes Undergoing Soil Remediation and Their Immediate Neighbors

In previous newsletters we have listed a group of general protective guidelines to follow in your normal activities around your homes. If you have not seen these guidelines, please contact the Spring Valley Information Line at (202) 535-1755. Leave your name and address and a copy of the guidelines will be sent to you.

Listed below are Exposure Prevention Tips to be used by residents of properties while they are undergoing arsenic removals. Residents who live in the immediate vicinity of the removal actions should also follow these tips.

### Clothing

- Clean or remove shoes before entering your home to avoid tracking in soil.

### Home Care

- To prevent dust build up, clean floors, window frames, windowsills, dining tables and counter tops regularly.
- To prevent entry of fine dust into your home, consider covering your outside windows with plastic sheeting.
- Avoid dusty conditions that increase your chance of exposure, such as working outside your home on windy days or being outside during the operation of earth moving equipment.
- Change the filters on your heating/air conditioning unit regularly. By upgrading the filter type you can increase the ability of your unit to collect small dust particles.
- Always wash your fruits thoroughly before eating them. To prevent dust from settling, consider covering fruits sitting on an open counter.

### Children

- Remember to wash children's hands often. Important times are before mealtime, naptime and bedtime.
- Keep play areas clean. Wash bottles, pacifiers and stuffed toys regularly.

